T-P 5/2/67

Nix on Managed News Ordered

'Calculated Withholding' Hit by McNamara

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara on Monday prohibited "the calculated withholding of unfavorable news stories" from official information outlets serving American servicemen.

The Pentogon chief specifically named the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service and Stars and Stripes, a service newspaper which was involved in a censoring incident in March.

That incident led to the reassignment of an Army colonel who initially refused to halt publication of a story reporting the arrest of the 19-year-old son of the U.S. ambassador to West Germany.

In a memorandum to the services and defense agencies, McNamara said the Pentagon's public information policy demands maximum disclosure of information within security bounds.

ARMED FORCES

Members of the armed forces, McNamara said "are entitled to the same unrestricted access to news as are all other citizens.

"Interference to this access of news will not be permitted.

"The calculated withholding of unfavorable news stories and wire service reports from troop information publications such as Stars and Stripes, or the censorship of news stories or broadcasts over such outlets as Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, is prohibited."

Thomas Morris assistant secretary of defense for manpower, was directed to see that the troops are assured of a free flow of information.

"News management and meddling with the news will not be tolerated," McNamara said, "either in external public information or internal troop information."

Pentagon spokesmen said the memorandum was prompted by the Stars and Stripes incident in March, and similar censorship problems in the past.

PR OFFICER

The March incident involved Army Col. George E. Moranda, former public affairs officer at the Army's European headquarters in Heidelberg, Germany.

Reports said Moranda was fired from his post after he refused to kill a Stars and Stripes story about the arrest of Michael A. McGhee, son of U.S. Ambassador George C. McGhee, on a charge of driving while under the influence of drugs.

The Pentagon later acknowledged that Army headquarters in Europe instructed the service paper to drop the story after it had appeared in two earlier editions.

But the Pentagon declined to say Moranda's reassignment came as a result of the incident. He was removed, the Pentagon said, "because of a loss of confidence in his suitability for assignment as public affairs officer, U.S. Army Europe."

The reassignment was ordered by Gen. Andrew P. O'Meara, commander of Army forces in Europe.

The Pentagon later announced that O'Meara will retire June 1 after 37 years of active service.